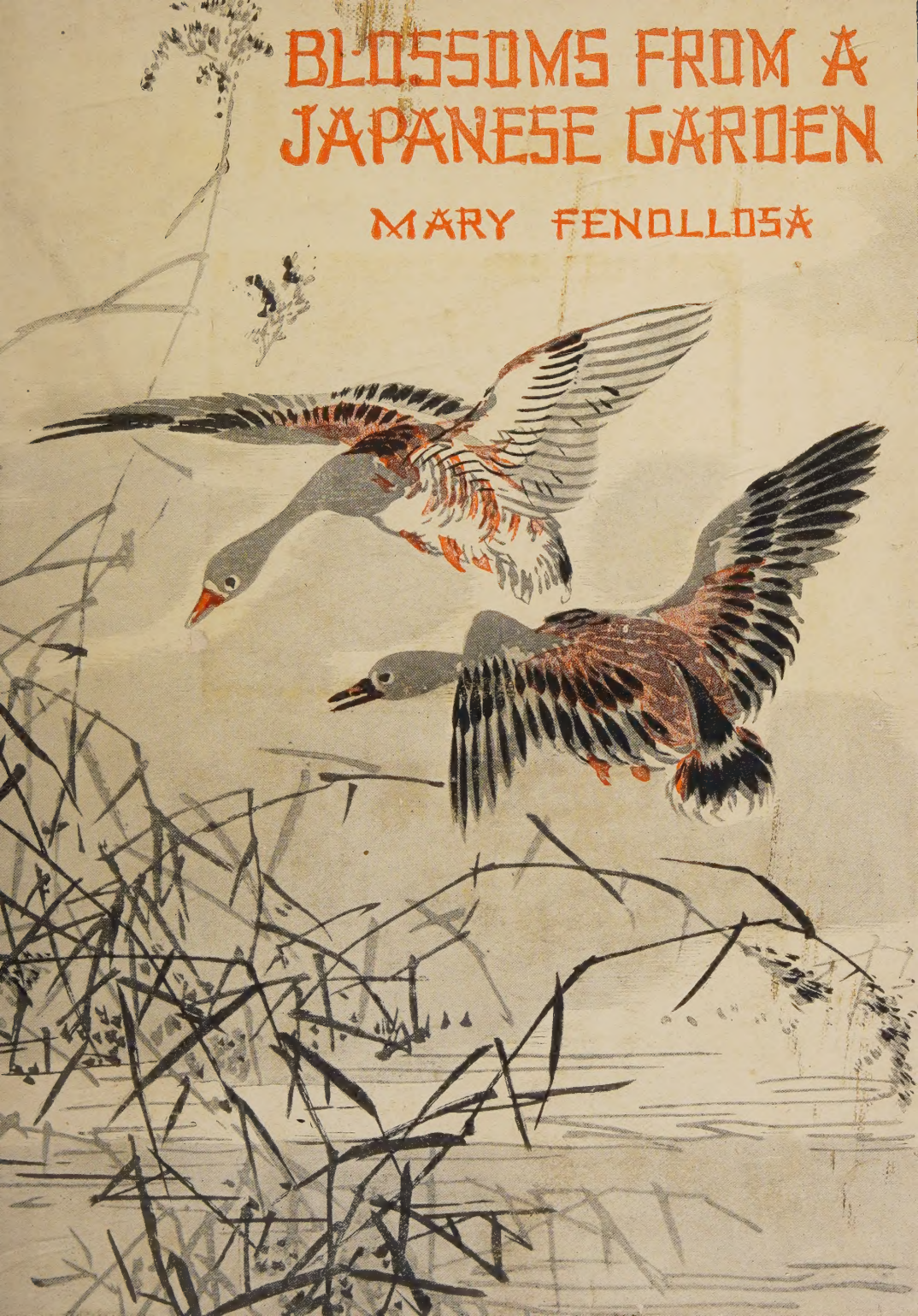
BLOSSOMS FROM A JAPANESE GARDEN

MARY FENOLLOSA



BLOSSOMS from a JAPANESE GARDEN

By MARY FENOLLOSA

THESE delicate and humorous verses for children are imbued with the artistic nature of the Japanese and their legends, and are in themselves enchanting. They tell simply of the customs of Japanese children —the Amé-ya, who models queer animals out of clay, the Japanese Gardens that are contained in a dish, the musical instruments, the cherry picnic, stories of the flowers, and other interesting matters.

Mary Fenollosa is widely known as the editor of "Epochs of Chinese and Japanese Art," the monumental work by her husband, Ernest F. Fenollosa, and also is noted as a novelist under the pseudonym of "Sidney McCall." During her long residence in Japan she had an extraordinary opportunity to become familiar with Japanese life and customs.

The profuse illustrations in colors are by Japanese artists, and add to the fascination of a book which will surely be loved by children.

With colored illustrations by Japanese artists. Cloth, small 4to, $1.50 net; postpaid $1.61.

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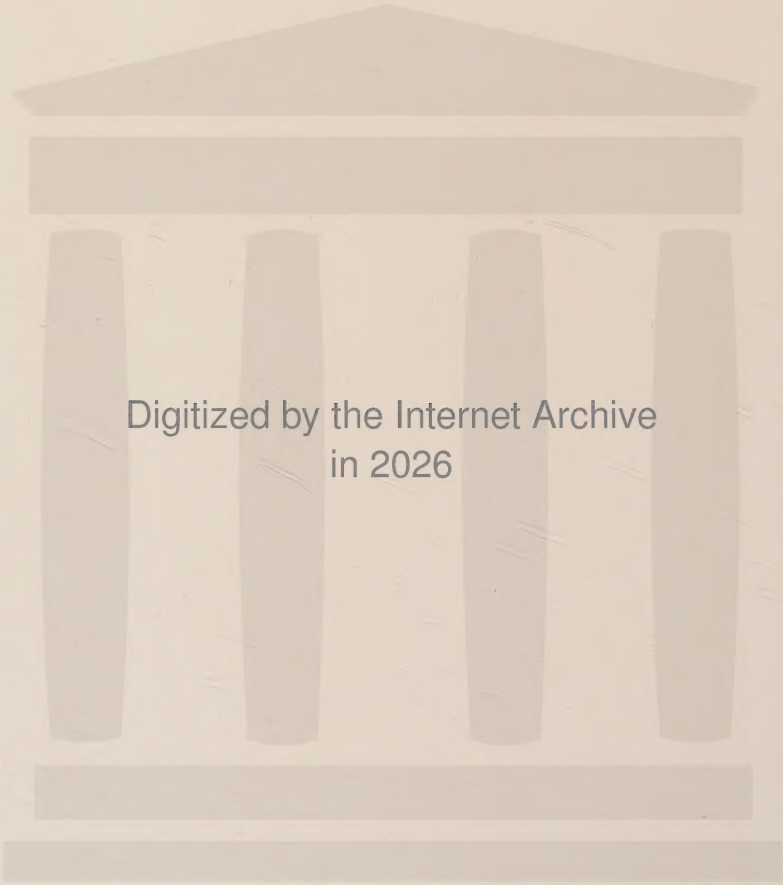
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BLOSSOMS FROM A JAPANESE GARDEN

A Book of Child-Verses

BY

MARY FENOLLOSA

ILLUSTRATED IN COLOR BY
JAPANESE ARTISTS

NEW YORK
FREDERICK A. STOKES COMPANY
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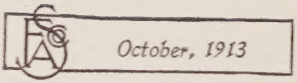

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THE AMÈ-YA

DOWN the narrow streets of Yeddo
Comes a peddler old and gray,
On his back a wondrous outfit,
In his mouth a pipe of clay.
Loud he whistles, and the children,
Crowding, haste from near and far,
Clasp their little hands for pleasure,
"Yonder comes the Amè-ya!"

Gently down he sets the work-shop,
On whose lacquered shelves is laid
Rice-flour paste in lacquered vessels,
Tinted every different shade.
Marvellous are the things he fashions,
Birds and beasts and moon and star.
"Now what will you, bright-eyed youngsters?"
Gaily asks the Amè-ya.

"First a dragon." Soft and pliant
Swells the red and yellow dough.
Like a curious twisted bubble
From his pipe they watch it blow.

Eyes of bead, and fins of silver,
There, 'tis finished, naught to mar.
"Ah, it's mine!" the children clamor,
"Give it to me, Amè-ya!"

"Bring your rin,[1] and bring your tempo,[2]
Cheap the price for such a sight.
Every child shall have a wonder
If I blow and blow till night."
Fruit and flower, see them growing
Planted in a tiny jar.
'Tis no marvel that the children
Love the kindly Amè-ya.

[1] *Rin.* One-tenth of a cent.

[2] *Tempo.* Eight cents, a long, oval copper coin with a square hole in the middle.

THE MUSICIANS

THE merry-hearted samisen
Is very seldom played
By any but a musumè
Or lowly-nurtured maid.

The high-born child, the O-jo-san,
Must learn with all her strength
The koto's many silver strings,
Its rich and polished length.

The musumè, with face upturned,
Will sing me, shrill and sweet,
Quaint tales of love and chivalry
And ballads of the street.

The O-jo-san, with drooping lids
And voice, a summer sigh,
Will sing of moonlight, mist and rain,
Of mountains dark and high.

So dear I find these little maids,
And yet so far apart;
They have one meeting-place alone,
And that is—in my heart.

A JAPANESE GARDEN

NOT long ago
In Tokio
I found a garden old,
Where hoary trees
Bent gnarléd knees
To tufts of velvet mould.

A lamp of stone
All lichen-grown
With rayless eye peered on;
While ancient rocks
With mossy locks
Sat silent in the sun.

A river-bed
With pebbles spread
Curved stiffly through the glade,
Where water-reeds
And ferny weeds
Spun fairy tales of shade.

And gazing thus,
So covetous
I soon became, I trow,
I bought the whole,—
It's in a bowl
And on my table now.

THE BAMBOO

ONE night when the hills were drenched with dew
And moonbeams lay about,
The comical cone of a young bamboo
Came cautiously creeping out.

It tossed aside its cap of brown,
Amazed at the sudden light,
And so pleased it was with the world it had found
It grew six feet that night.

It grew and it grew in the summer breeze,
It grew and it grew until
It looked right over the camphor-trees
To the further side of the hill.

"Udzukushii!" the bamboo-cutter cried,
As with series of shuddering shocks
He chopped it all round till it fell to the ground,
Then he hauled it away with an ox.

He made him a tub from the lowermost round,
And a pail from the very next one;
A caddy for rice from the following slice
And his work was no more than begun.

The next were some vases and medicine-cases,
Then, dippers and cups galore;
There were platters and bowls, and pickets and poles,
And matting to spread on the floor.

A parasol-frame and an intricate game,
And ribs for a gossamer fan;
A sole for his shoe, and a tooth-pick or two.—
He made next,—this wonderful man!

A pencil, I think, and a holder for ink,
A stem for his miniature pipe;
A ring for his hand, and a tall flower-stand,
And a basket for oranges ripe.

A rake then he made; and a small garden spade,
And a trellis to loop up his vine;
A flute which he blew, and a tea-strainer, too,
And a fiddle to squeak shrill and fine.

It would take me all day, should I try thus to say
All that jolly old man brought to view;
But a traveller I met says he's sitting there yet,
At work on that single bamboo.

THE MISCHIEVOUS MORNING-GLORY

(Adapted from the Japanese)

IT was the rosy flush of dawn
In beautiful Japan,
When, from the house with swinging pail,
Came little Noshi-San,
Her strapped and lacquered wooden clogs
A-clicking as she ran.

She hurried to the mossy well,
Then paused, for—what a sight!—
Her bucket-pole was held secure
By tendrils curling tight,
And one great, dewey, purple bloom
Had opened to the light.

The dainty thief, with smile and nod,
Looked up as if to say,
"I got here first; and don't you think
That really I should stay?"
And Noshi gravely answered, "Yes,
I'll find another way."

She sought a kindly neighbor's well
And, laughing, told her plight.
"Gift-water I must beg of you!"
The neighbor's smile was bright;
But, being Japanese, she thought
The child exactly right.

GOING TO SCHOOL IN THE RAIN

I LOVE the days of rain and storm,
For then I may not use
My stiff old foreign uniform
And heavy leather shoes.

But high and dry on wooden clogs,
With ankles free and bare,
I gaily plunge through all the bogs
Without a thought of care.

Then, like the moon, so big and round,
My oiled umbrella glows;
The light comes through, and on the ground
A yellow circle throws.

The other boys with haloes gay
Come shouting through the rain,
So glad to be, if but a day,
Real Japanese again.

A CHERRY PICNIC

LIKE mellow gold the April sun,
  Like wine the April breeze!
This is the very time for fun
  Among the cherry trees.

Up, O-basan, and Baby Blue!
  You must not sleep to-day.
The shop we'll close, that father, too,
  May have a holiday.

The stove shall go for boiling rice,
  With candy by the pound!
Old mats and blankets will be nice
  To spread upon the ground.

A thousand family groups like ours
  Will wander in the grove;
For such a carnival of flowers
  Is what the people love.

We'll ride in tram-cars to the gate
  Of big Uyèno Park,
And frolic there until it's late,
  Returning home at dark.

KITE-FLYING

I GOT a kite on New Year's Day,
A gold and scarlet treasure,
Upon whose face Yoshitsunè
Smiled out, as if in pleasure.

Rising first it went so high it made my eyelids shiver.
If I had a thousand miles of string, I'd let it sail forever!

The boys had many-a bigger kite,
Such lots I never counted!
But past them all, a splendid sight,
Mine, like an eagle, mounted!

Flying straight toward the sun without a dip or quiver,
If I had a whole round world of string, I'd let it rise forever!

THE HUNGRY BOY

WHEN a little, little fellow plays a whole, long day,
And hurries home at night to where the rice-pot puffs away,
He can feel himself grow thinner
As he pines and waits for dinner
And his nurse is placing things upon the tray!

O, the lovely smell of cooking when the food is clean and hot!
How I wish she'd cook it faster! But to urge her I must not,
For she's cross when in a hurry!
Now her face is bright and blurry
In the clouds of snowy steam from out the pot.

Ah, at last! Such fish and daikon, such a heap of gleaming rice!
I must shove it in, though mother often says it is not nice.
But a child who feels in danger
Of starvation is a stranger
To his very best behavior and his parents' kind advice.

WHAT THEY SAW IN THE MOON

THREE dear little maidens, one midsummer night,
Were watching a moon that was round as a shield;
And they told me, in turns, what the circle of light
To each, as a wonderful vision, revealed.

"I see," said O Yuki, "a something that grows
Into outline and shadow;—and now I can see
Two big staring eyes, and a mouth, and a nose,
Why, the whole moon is looking and laughing at me!"

"I see," said another, "a wavering road;
Upon it is trudging an old faggot-man;
His back is all crooked and bent with his load;
I wish we could help him!" said sweet Noshi-San.

"A rabbit I see!" cried the littlest girl,
"With ears like the wind where the white snow is driven;
He brays in a mortar, with pestle of pearl
The shining gold grains from the rice fields of heaven."

Now none saw the same, yet all saw a-right
And this is the lesson the wise moon taught;
Whatever one sees in a mirror of light
Is only the shadow of one's own thought.

So Yuki, smile on, while the moon's laughing low!
O tender heart! ache for the old man's pain!
But ah, with the littlest girl I will go
And pluck for the rabbit his starry grain!

THE FIFTH OF MAY

THE year has many a holiday,
But brightest is the Fifth of May;
When drums, and guns, and war-like toys
Bring merry times to little boys.

Above the houses, far and near,
The paper fishes then appear.
From bamboo poles they wheel and play
As though about to dart away.

The sky is like a globe o'erhead,
The roofs like purple pebbles spread,
And all the earth has now become
One jolly, big aquarium.

A SHOPPING EXPEDITION

LITTLE Miss Yuki, and Pretty Miss Ko,
And dear little Hanabi San
Went shopping one day
In the leisurely way
Which is that most approved in Japan.

Miss Ko bought a turtle ('twas made out of dough),
Miss Yuki a grasshopper stout;
But the baby averred
That she must have a bird
In a bag, with its head sticking out.

Returned to their mother, each purchase to show,
(Ko, Yuki, and Hanabi San,)
All had vanished!—a trait
Which, I grieve to relate,
Appertains to such things in Japan.

MIST ELVES

IN the morning I awake,
Dress, and run into the street,
Just to see the mist elves make
Strange sights of every thing I meet.
The willow tree is like a cloud
Elf-fastened to a slender post;
The bamboos wear a loosened shroud
That renders each a muffled ghost.

Sparrows on the daphne hedge,
Misty crows, they seem, on pines.
Out upon the window ledge
Puss, now a hazy ball, reclines.
The "To-fu" man I know so well,
Like his own shadow, hovers near;
And, ringing loud his shadow bell,
Cries "To-fu! To-fu!" sharp and clear.

In our garden flowers gleam,
Cherries pink, and red, and white;
Soft as pleasures in a dream

Ere waking fades the frail delight.
Like blurs of purple ink, that fall
And soak in tissued mist, are seen
The iris blossoms straight and tall
Above their sea of misty green.

Other lovely tricks to play
Might have pleased these elves of mist.
What, alas, I cannot say;
For now their great antagonist,
The Sun, rose up in jealous mind
With blasts of light that pierced the gray.—
The elves have fled on steeds of wind;
And now begins another day.

THE FADELESS FLOWERS

OUR neighbor's house has walls of gold
Where, crowded full as they can hold,
Grow flower clusters, red and blue
With many other colors, too.

No rain must touch these painted blooms;
No sunshine reach their shaded rooms;
They never fade, but, day by day,
Stand bright and beautiful and gay.

We have no painted flowers at all,
Just those we planted near the wall;
They love the sun and shining rain;
They fade, but always bloom again.

We have a cherry-tree so pink
It's made of sunrise clouds, you think;
The petals fall, but then they make
A carpet of our tiny lake.

And soon the long wistaria swings,
The iris spreads its purple wings.
Great paeonies then open wide
To show their golden hearts inside.

Through summer months they glide so fast
That each seems dearer than the last.
For this I love true flowers more
Than all our neighbor's golden store.

A ROAD-SIDE TEA-PARTY

BESIDE a dusty village road,
Beneath a willow tree,
Two tiny maidens of Japan
Played make-believe at tea.
The cups were only bits of shell,
The tea-pot just a stone,
The cakes all mud and sanded clay,
And servant there was none.

But ah! the charming courtesy,
The deep, deep breaths they drew
At each pretended sip to show
How exquisite the brew.
"Augustly deign this cake to taste,
My cook will be so proud!"
With heads that touched the earthy floor
The guest and hostess bowed.

A traveller, pausing in the shade
To watch the pretty scene,
Now from his sleeve a parcel took
Of cake and sugared bean,
Designed for little ones at home
—But, in the Buddha's name,
Unnoticed now, he set it down
And hurried whence he came.

Erect once more,—with gasping breath
And wonder-sparkling eyes
The two examined, piece by piece,
The new, mysterious prize.
At length, the hostess, whispering, said,
"It's Buddha, I believe.
He saw we just pretended tea
And dropped it from his sleeve!"

A TYPHOON

WE knew the storm was coming
Long, long before it came;
For the whole air woke to humming
And the wind smelled hot, like flame.

The clouds sank low and lower;
The crows wheeled close, for fear,
And the flat earth seemed to cower
With sense of danger near.

Then like a nest of dragons
It fell upon the town;
It overturned the wagons
And knocked the drivers down.

It kicked the dust to billows
That climbed the frightened air;
And backward jerked the willows
As by a woman's hair.

The pond, so placid lying
  Was tilted like a dish;
It sent the roof-tiles flying
  As though it scaled a fish.

Our pretty wooden bucket
  That hangs beside the door
Rose as the monster struck it
  And came to earth no more.

In midst of fiercest motion
  And shrieks, it left the sky
To rush upon the ocean.
  Old Typhoon San, Good-bye!

GOOD-LUCK DREAMS

LAST night I dreamed of Fuji-San,
I saw its snowy crest.
Of all the dreams in all Japan
This dream is quite the best.

Some splendid luck it always brings.
I wonder what I'll choose!
There are so very many things
A boy like me can use.

My little brother wants a kite.
I'm far too old for that.
I heard my sister pray last night
To find a lonesome cat.

Poor babies! Well, it isn't right
To keep my luck alone.
Perhaps I'll dream again to-night
And see a bigger cone.

I'll dream of egg-plants in a row;
Of falcons flying free.
Of all the dreams a boy may know
These are the lucky three.

THE GOOD BROTHER

NOT only does this little boy his baby sister tend,
And bear her on his youthful back, her very closest friend;
But also to his sister Kō, whose age is barely three,
And to his brother Kējiro, he's kind as kind can be.

When Kō San breaks her sandal-strap, he mends it tight and well;
When Kējiro does naughty things, this brother does not tell;
But, kind and grave and generous, will argue with the child,
And sometimes quote Confucius, in accents firm and mild.

If, on his back, the infant small with colic whines and groans,
This noble brother lifts his voice in song that drowns her moans.
And all the mothers, far and near, on seeing him will cry,
"There goes a model son, O dear! that such a one had I!"

THE SEED

(GOOD-NIGHT)

HERE'S a sleepy little seed
Wants to go to bed.
Tightly shut the little eye
In his sleepy head.

Dig a couch in earth for him,
Soft and warm and deep;
Tuck the cover gently in—
Now he's fast asleep.

(GOOD-MORNING)

What a yawn of little leaves!
What a stretch of root!
Baby seed is up at last;
Now he wants to shoot!

Bring him bath of rosy dew,
Give him yards of twine,
Hear him laugh his tendrils out!
Soon he'll be a vine.

(GROWTH)

Leaves are crowding thick and fast.
  Stems are brittle things!
Grave responsibility
  High position brings.

Earth-worm dragons must be slain,
  Humming-birds defied.
"Would I were a seed again!"
  Morning-glory cried.

(BLOSSOMS)

Ah, a bud! all blue and white,
  Twisted like a shell.
Something strange must happen soon,
  Any one can tell!

Something stirs against the dawn!—
  Is it bird or bee?
Or a purple-hearted song
  Blown for you and me?

SNOW

LAST night the earth was soft with grass;
To-day it's hard and white.
How strange a thing to come to pass
Within a single night!

The sparrows flutter to and fro,
And have no place to dig;
Across our yard a strutting crow
Looks very black and big.

At school, in recess time, I'll make
A man of snow, whose features
Shall reproduce without mistake
Our ugly foreign teacher's.

RICE RAINS

RICE rains, rice rains, I wish you'd go away!
You make the sky so black with clouds we cannot see to play!
The rivers run with yellow mud,—the bamboo gutters spill,
And soon, I fear, you'll wash away the pine-tree on the hill.

Rice rains, rice rains, I hope you'll soon be through;
We children have to sulk indoors, and all because of you!
My mother says you help to grow the rice that we must eat.
But I am sure there's plenty in the rice-shop down the street!

A SEA-SIDE STROLL

(From the Japanese)

BESIDE the sea, from out its hole,
An earth-worm started for a stroll.
He met a crab who, scoffing, said,
"Which is your tail, and which your head?"

"You well may ask," the earth-worm cried,
"Your ugly face stuck on your side!
But, first of all, I'd like to know
Which way you're walking, to or fro?"

A devil-fish rushed up to see
What all this quarrelling could be;
And, standing near, with pompous pose
Cried, "I'll be judge, bring out your woes!"

The others turned with gibe and jeer.
"O wond'rous judge! we fain would hear
If, spite of all your learned charms,
You're walking on your legs or arms?"

And then they fought, and strewed the beach
With heads, arms, legs and tails of each.
But, worst of all, the questions,—they
Remain unanswered to this day!

HOW WE LOOK TO THEM

"I-JIN Pa-pa! Neko Pa-pa!
I-jin Pa-pa! Neko Pa-pa!"
Hear the naughty children cry
Seeing Mrs. Smith go by.

Mothers scold when they are told,
Fathers tell them "Drop it";
On the street, policemen meet
Planning how to stop it.

Still the village boys, alas,
Watch to see the I-jins pass;
"I-jin Pa-pa!" still they shout.
This is how they feel, no doubt.

KASUGA PARK

NEAR the old town of Nara, in Kasuga Park,
Are thousands of fire-flies to light up the dark;
And thousands of pines, with wistaria vines,
That march up the hillsides and shadow the shrines.

Even better than these to the children who go
To this Park, which all Japanese children must know,
Are thousands of deer that crowd up so near,
They eat from your hand, without thinking of fear.

There are big papa-deer with their horns standing out,
And sleek, spotted mama-deer grazing about;
But nicest of all are the baby-deer small,
Each fuzzy and soft like a brown velvet ball.

Forever and ever they've lived in the wood,
And no one has hurt them,—as if Buddhists could!
And the great shadow pines, with wistaria vines,
Smile down on the deer-folk and guard the old shrines.

THE DOLL

LITTLE Bright-Eyes, tell me true
Is your dolly fond of you?
Do you think she knows or cares
Aught for all your mother-airs?

She is but a senseless thing,
Made of paper, wood, and string;
But you pet her, nurse, and feed
Just as though she lived indeed.

Bright-Eyes flashed me half a smile,
Clasping dolly all the while,—
"I must love her hard, you know
Or her soul will never grow.

If I offer food and dress,
Sing her songs of tenderness,
Day by day her heart shall win
Room to put her mother in."

DRAGON-FLIES

JIRO sees the dragon-flies
Flitting o'er the garden sod.
"Should I pluck their wings," he cries,
"Each would be a pepper-pod!"

"Cruel one!" with frowns and nods
Kindly Taro then replies;
"Fasten wings to pepper-pods,
And you make them dragon-flies!"

TAKÉ KAKUZO

TAKÉ Kakuzo one day played truant from his school;
O Také Kakuzo!
Yes, truant from his school.
He walked beyond the city streets until he found a pool,
And there he fished for eels and things within a slimy pool,
And never thought of school.
O Také Kakuzo!

The sun was hot, the wind was still, as Také fished away;
O Také Kakuzo!
Fished placidly away.
And never did a ripple come upon the waters gray,
And never felt he any jerk beneath the waters gray,
But fished and fished away.
O Také Kakuzo!

At last the angler's naughty head was drooping low with sleep;
O Také Kakuzo!
Yes, calm untroubled sleep;
When,—came a sudden mighty jerk from out the slimy deep,

And Také caught—a jumping slate! from out the slimy deep,
Which put an end to sleep.
O Take Kakuzo!

And now a strange yet lively crew began to feed his hook,
O Také Kakuzo!
His bent pin of a hook.
For pens and pencils, rods and chalk, the frightened fisher took,
All flopping round;—and then an imp the shrieking fisher took
From off a red-hot hook!
O Také Kakuzo!

Without a backward glance he ran, still shrieking, from the pool;
O Také Kakuzo!
Yes, from that awful pool.
And woke!—to hear the pupils laugh beside his desk at school;
To see his friends, his teacher kind, the map-hung walls of school.
It was a night-mare pool!
O Také Kakuzo!

TAKÉ KAKUZO AS A PHILOSOPHER

NOW, Také Kakuzo is small,
His brothers both are big:
And if, beneath the water-fall,
They fish, and let him go at all,
'Tis but for worms to dig.

He snares them bait from many a nook,
The basket he must bear;
But never may he use a hook
Or from the silver-throated brook
Snatch wonders into air.

Perhaps this seems a cruel fate
For Také Kakuzo;
But wise is he, though only eight,
He knows he only has to wait,
And Time will help him grow.

TAKÉ KAKUZO AND THE IMP

IN fair Japan,—(so tourists say)
The children seldom cry;
But, singing, laughing all the day
At night will put their toys away
And down to slumber lie.

The truth of this I gladly state,
With one exception small.
Alas! That I must now relate
The tale of Kakuzo, whose fate
A warning proves to all.

A healthy child, as one might see,
Was Také Kakuzo.
Within his small O naka-ni
No worm was hid. More plump was he
Than pigeons at a show.

And yet he howled, in ways till then
Unknown in mild Japan.
His strength was as the strength of ten,
And all the neighbors shuddered when
His bellowings began.

Before the dawn was red he wept,
Ere barked the drowsy crow.
His voice was raised while others slept,
And bitter were the curses kept
For Také Kakuzo,

Then forth, in haste, his parents fared
To where a priest did dwell.
"He hath an Imp," the sage declared,
"And measures stern must not be spared,
We'll put him in the well."

A net was found,—a rope,—and deep,
Deep through the awful gloom
He sank,—too terrified to weep,
And clutching at the slimy, steep
Black edges of his doom.

Three times they dipped that wretched child
The while the priest did pray.
The mother's eyes were dark and wild,
The father scarcely reconciled
To use the cruel way.

They drew him up, all limp and white
As clam without a shell.
But never since, by day or night,
Has Také wept. The priest was right,
His Imp stayed in the well.

* * * * * * * *

And still, at dawn, before the crow
At midnight, ere the bell,
An echo comes, a wail of woe,
The cast-off Imp of Kakuzo
Imprisoned in the well.

EXPERIENCE

MY brother he is eight years old,
While I am four to-day.
My mother binds me on his back,
And there I sleep and play.

He lets me hold his top and ball,
Or pull the kite's sharp string;
He gives me half of all he gets,
Of cakes or anything.

Sometimes I jerk his short, black hair,
And kick him with my heels;
And stick my fingers in his ears
To hear his funny squeals.

One day I asked him what the use
Of legs and feet to me,
When his were plenty for us both:
He answered, "Wait and see!"

To-day I'm four years old! To-day
My cruel mother tied
The baby sister on my back
Although I kicked and cried:

And in the garden, there I saw—
(I wish that I were dead!)
My brother turning somersaults
And standing on his head!

SUMMER

HOW flat the clouds in summer lie!
As lily-leaves upon the moat,
So round and bright against the sky,
I see them drift and float.

The trees are purple in the sun,
Like puffs of shadow, dark and still,
And from the heart of every one
The locusts sing and shrill.

So hot it is we cannot play.
We roll about the matted floor,
Or try to sleep the time away
Beside the open door.

But soon the sun will set, and then
Along the dry and dusty street
Will come the busy water-men
To make the city sweet.

And we, with all our hardships past,
In *tabi*, dress and sashes bright,
Shall find our little friends at last,
And play till late at night.

BUGLES

TA-RAT-TA-TA-TA! Ta-rat-ta-ta-ta!
From under the pines on the castle wall
The soldiers are blowing their bugle call.
The crows laugh out,
And the small boys shout,
While the trees stand sulky and tall.
Ta-rat-ta-ta-ta! When I'm grown to a man
I'll go the army, and fight for Japan!

Ta-rat-ta-ta-ta! Ta-rat-ta-ta-ta!
Down under the castle the soldiers drill,
With tramping of horses and bugles shrill;
With long white lines
Where the bayonet shines,
And the echoes roll down from the hill.
Ta-rat-ta-ta-ta! When I'm grown to a man
I'll go to the army, and fight for Japan!

IRIS FLOWERS

MY mother let me go with her,
(I had been good all day),
To see the iris flowers that bloom
In gardens far away.

We walked and walked through hedges green,
Through rice-fields empty still,
To where we saw a garden gate
Beneath the farthest hill.

She pointed out the rows of "flowers";—
I saw no planted things,
But white and purple butterflies
Tied down with silken strings.

They strained and fluttered in the breeze,
So eager to be free;
I begged the man to let them go,
But mother laughed at me.

She said that they could never rise,
  Like birds, to heaven so blue.
But even mothers do not know
  Some things that children do.

That night, the flowers untied themselves
  And softly stole away,
To fly in sunshine round my dreams
  Until the break of day.

THE PROUD VEGETABLES

IN a funny little garden not much bigger than a mat,
There lived a thriving family, its members all were fat;
But some were short, and some were tall, and some were almost round,
And some ran high on bamboo poles, and some lay on the ground.

Of these old Father Pumpkin was, perhaps, the proudest one.
He claimed to trace his family vine directly from the sun.
"We both are round and yellow, we both are bright," said he,
"A stronger family likeness one could scarcely wish to see."

Old Mrs. Squash hung on the fence; she had a crooked neck,
Perhaps 'twas hanging made it so,—her nerves were quite a wreck.
Near by, upon a planted row of faggots, dry and lean,
The young cucumbers climbed to swing their Indian clubs of green.

A big white *daikon* hid in earth beneath his leafy crest;
And mole-like sweet potatoes crept around his quiet nest.
Above were growing pearly pease, and beans of many kinds
With pods like tiny castanets to mock the summer winds.

There, in a spot that feels the sun, the swarthy egg-plant weaves
Great webs of frosted tapestry and hangs them out for leaves.
Its funny azure blossoms give a merry, shrivelled wink,
And lifting up the leaves display great drops of purple ink.

Now, life went on in harmony and pleasing indolence
Till Mrs. Squash had vertigo and tumbled off the fence;
But not to earth she fell! Alas,—but down, with all her force,
Upon old Father Pumpkin's head, and cracked his skull, of course.

At this a fearful din arose. The pods began to split,
Cucumbers turned a sickly hue, the *daikon* had a fit,
The sweet potatoes rent the ground,—the egg-plant dropped his loom,
While every polished berry seemed to gain an added gloom.

And, worst of all, there came a man, who once had planted them.
He dug that little family up by root and leaf and stem,
He piled them high in baskets, in a most unfeeling way—
All this was told me by the cook,—we ate the last to-day.

SUMMER SHOWERS

WHEN showers come on summer days,
(Days all hot and dry and still,)
The glad air turns to silver haze
And hides the castle on the hill.

The hen with one important chick,
Comes roosting on the kitchen sill;
And Tsunè sets the buckets quick
That they with dripping rain may fill.

The drooping gourd-leaves drink again;
The willow weeps an emerald tide;
And, when I go to catch the rain,
My mother smiles, and does not chide.

But should the thunder-bolts begin,
(A devil falls with every blast,)
We'd hang the net, and crawl within
Till storm and danger both are past.

JIRO AND TARO

TWO sturdy little boys of eight,
Close-knit in joy and sorrow,
Are these whose tale I now relate—
Small Jiro-san and Taro.

Their parents were the same; their food
Might well have pleased the haughty;
But Taro-san was always good,
While Jiro-san was naughty.

When asked the slightest thing to do
This Jiro shrank with horror;
Till all the chores and errands, too,
Became the part of Taro.

He never gave a sullen frown,
Or hid behind the hedges;
Or came from play with tattered gown
And mud about the edges.

But always cheerful, gay and bright
  As any busy sparrow,
He filled his parents' heart with light,
  This model son called Taro.

But Jiro! As an angry sea
  He scowled, and sulked and lowered,
Not one redeeming trait had he,—
  A bully and a coward.

What contrast do we thus employ!
  What types diverse we borrow!
Yet stay! the moods of one small boy
  Are Jiro-san and Taro!

THE MYSTERIOUS PUP

A FLUFFY dog had Kakuzo
Which was so very white
That when he walked across the snow
He vanished out of sight.

THE JISHIN

(THE EARTHQUAKE)

A JISHIN
Will begin
With a tiny start and shiver.
The *shoji* gently chatter,
The mice and children scatter,
For they know well what's the matter
When the ground begins to quiver.
O jishin,
Good jishin,
Please don't be, this time, a big one, be a small one,
Good jishin!

Bad jishin
Tumbles in
With the howl and growl of thunder!
The plaster walls are crashing,
The kitchen dishes smashing,
The broken roof-tiles gnashing,
Till the house is half asunder!
O jishin,
Bad jishin,
You're the worst we've felt for ages. O you horrid
Bad jishin!

MY NEIGHBOR'S BAMBOO

A GROVE of bamboo, thick and tall,
Grows beside our neighbor's wall.
For he is rich, and we are poor;—
Yet his bamboo loves *us* more!

Toward our little roof it bends,
Cool and shade in summer lends;
In autumn proves a green defense
From much windy violence.

When winter comes, and clinging snow
Drags the stately plumage low,
Against our eaves one pinion rests,
Melting last year's swallow nests.

I scarcely think that those who own
All the bamboo grove, have known
In all their lives such love and pride
As this I feel, who live outside.

THE OBĀ-SAN

(THE GRANDMOTHER)

THE spring is fair with mist and flowers,
The summer still and green;
And autumn brings the loveliest hours
That earth has ever seen.

But ah, the joy of many a night
When, housed from wintry gales,
We'd gather round the charcoal bright
And beg for fairy-tales!

"More stories?" cried the Obā-san;
Then smiling, wrinkled, slow,
With spectacles on nose began:—
"Once, long, long years ago——"

"Yes, Obā-san!"—with eager nods
We listened. "Ages when
The giants, dragons, elves and Gods
Were not afraid of men,

"There was a fisher-boy who gained
A sea-maid for his wife,
And, through her love, the gift obtained
Of everlasting life.

"But back to earth he slyly peeped
Into his box—the dunce!—
And full three thousand birthdays leaped
Upon his back at once."

"More! Tell us more!" we pleading cried;
And, smiling deeper still,
She told us tales of pomp and pride;
Of river, vale and hill;

Of Mr. Fox, that cunning sprite
Who shaves the farmer's head;
Of bloody ghosts that come by night
To haunt the sinner's bed;

Of knights so brave, and loyal too;
Of Benkei San, the strong;
Yoshitsunè, whose heart was true
Yet suffered grievous wrong.—

"The past is far, too far!" we cried,
"Must it be always so?"
But Grandma only smiled,—then sighed,
"Yes, long, long years ago!"

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